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Atari Online News, Etc.
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~ Wire Transfers: Say No ~ SETI@home's Team Atari ~ Happy 4th of July!

-* Dell Starts PC Sweepstakes! *-
-* China Threatens Internet Cafe Owners *-
-* Microsoft Passport Raises Privacy Issues! *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

Happy 4th of July to our American readers! After the 9/11 tragedy, this year's 4th of July takes on a more somber meaning for Americans. It's truly a remembrance of independence and other freedoms. After awhile, one takes such things for granted; and we shouldn't.

With the shortened holiday week, this issue reflects a smaller-than-usual size. It happens from time to time and news tends to reflect the time of the year. And the summer months tend to be the slowest of the year anyway.

It's been hell around here lately - literally! We've had a genuine 4-day heat wave here in the Northeast. The temperatures in my area soared to over 95 degrees for the first four days of the week; and the humidity has been oppressive. Thankfully, we have some air conditioning and the pool was a welcome relief! We had a neighborhood block party on the 4th, and it was almost unbearable to be outside enjoying it. My wife or I would occasionally return to the house to check on our two dogs, and take a quick dip in the pool to cool off! It was great to finally meet some of our neighbors who we really only knew to wave at in passing. There was a roasted pig at one house (now that was a hot area!) and carnival-like atmospheres at other's. It was a really enjoyable day which will likely become an annual event. And naturally, fireworks ended the event - although my wife and I watched from the house because the bugs were getting hungry! We ended the night off with a cool and refreshing swim. Today it finally cooled off a little and the humidity dropped considerably - thankfully.

Well, let's get to this week's issue and then begin a nice restful weekend!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Well friends and neighbors, summer has well and truly come to the northeast. It's been hot and humid by our standards for the past several

weeks. I guess that people in other parts of the country... and parts of the world too... would think that an average daily high of 97 degrees, and an average dissecting of about 78 was an "easy" day, but for the northeast portion of the United States, it's really something that we try to avoid.

I'm sure that folks in Louisiana or Arizona would chuckle at my musings about either the heat or humidity, but the fact that we only have really hot humid weather like this for a short time makes it harder to become accustomed to. All I can say is: Thank goodness for air conditioning!

On another subject, SETI@home's TEAM ATARI is doing relatively well. The 51 members have so far contributed almost 88 years of CPU time, and have completed more than 61,500 work units. A work unit is a block of data that has been collected by the Arecibo radio telescope in Puerto Rico. If I remember correctly, it represents just over a minute of actual recording. But dissecting the data that may be contained in this block takes a bit longer. Things like doppler shifting are taken into account. All of the little checks that must be done take quite a while. If you've got an average Intel or PowerPC based computer, you can figure on it taking about ten or twelve hours to complete a work unit. There's even a screensaver that lets you watch the data graphically as it's being worked on. The work unit is checked while you are doing whatever it is that you usually do with your computer, so you don't have to worry about tying your computer up.

The really cool thing about this project is that you don't have to know anything about radio signals or astronomy or physics in order to participate. All you need is a PC or Mac (no, the software doesn't exist for Atari computers unfortunately) and an internet connection.

If you'd like to take a look at what SETI@home is all about, point your browser to: <http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu>

Team Atari information can be found at:

http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/stats/team/team_21046.html

If you're of a mind to do so, please join up and help out. It'd be great to have the first signal detected from an extraterrestrial intelligence found by an Atari user... even if it wasn't found with an Atari. And even if you aren't the one that happens to find THE signal, you will still be able to say that you participated in a real, honest-to-goodness scientific project to look for ET!

Well, let's get to the news, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
=====

Joseph Place asks about an FPU for his Falcon030:

"Will this FPU work in my Falcon? [It's a] Motorola MC6882FN33A."

Robert Schaffner gives Joseph a simple, succinct answer:

"Yes"

Jared Falvo adds his opinion:

"Any math-intensive operations will benefit from the MC68882 Math co-processor. But otherwise, you should see little, if any, difference in overall operation."

Peter Persson sets Joseph and Jared straight:

"Almost. Math intensive programs that are designed to take advantage of a match co processor will benefit from it.

Comparison: Audio stuff doesn't automatically sound better just because you happen to have a Falcon with a DSP and 16 bit sound capability, right?

I have an FPU. Most stuff doesn't use it. Some demos and raytracing stuff requires it however."

Wayne Martz tells Peter:

"You need a different comparison. Audio stuff most definitely does sound better on a falcon with DSP & 16 bit sound, at least compared to ST's - TT's. My audio also sounded better when I got a FAD from Line Audio with 18 bit converters.

An interesting thing - I had to send my CT2B Falcon to Mr. Cuzba in France to fix my lousy installation. I was not aware that my Falcon had an FPU at all. It was apparently disconnected, and he reconnected it for me. Good thing too, because I wanted to make mp3's with Aniplayer, and it requires an FPU for that.

The main thing is that a program will only benefit from an FPU if the code was written to use it, otherwise you won't notice a difference."

Ken Kosut asks about putting MIDI music on a CD:

"Does anyone know how to convert a MIDI file to .AIF, .AVR or .WAV format. What additional software/hardware is needed?

The goal is to burn a MIDI file to CD. Strictly Atari Platform - Hopefully using CDWriter Suite.

Cost is a factor."

Mark Duckworth tells Ken:

"In order to do this you need some sort of program to do it. I know there was a software package out for Atari that would do this.

In order to figure out what you need you should understand what is going on. A midi file is basically like a music script. It is a piece of a puzzle to reproduce it. In order to reproduce it you'll need samples, and a soft/hard synthesizer.

One approach can be to play the midi file -> sound canvas or other sound

module -> record the resulting sound.

another method is TiMidity++ for linux which is a "midi converter" this will basically play the "script" out to a set of samples that you have defined to reproduce the song.

Any of these types of programs though need a set of samples to work with. You can use the piano samples from a Yamaha Clavinova or a Roland Grand Piano, etc, so forth and so on. So it's like personal preference. I am pretty sure Gravis Ultrasound sample packs are pretty easy to find (and what you are supposed to use with Timidity. Timidity is for linux. When it comes to Windows software or that particular software package for atari, I'm not sure."

John Garone adds his experience to the mix:

"I use Cubase on a Falcon to record the audio from a mixing board fed by a MegaST4 running an older sequencer program (Midisoft) which plays MIDI files and sounds out of several modules. Then convert the Cubase AIF to WAV with 525. Then CDwriter to record the WAV on CD. Whew!"

Tim Conrardy tells Ken:

"my suggestion is to record your MIDI parts to cassette tape (I do this all the time)and then you will need to find an application for your Falcon that records and saves as WAVE, AIF or AVR which is what CDW needs to make a CD from. Then simply record the cassette mix to your falcon.

Anyone know of an Audio recorder for Falcon that saves as WAVE, AIF or AVR ???

I did some searching and found this:

http://gbarges.free.fr/quincy_e.html

QUINCY

It's shareware...you can download it. The shareware price is only 40.00, which seems very reasonable.Great looking interface. You can even import MIDI files and synchronize Audio with it!It saves as AIF format. As someone else mentioned, you can convert it using a utility called 525, however if CD writer accepts AIF format you are set. I think this is your solution. I am going to try the program myself!"

Jonathan Mortimer asks about the possibility of incorporating new technology into Atari hardware:

"Did anyone ever try incorporating a TT or Medusa etc into a PC-style chassis and hooking up 3D cards or whatever? [It] Would be an interesting machine..."

Lonny Pursell tells Jonathan:

"My Hades060 is in a PC style case, however unless there are drivers for 3D cards it's mostly pointless. I do not have the skill to code drivers or I'd have done it some time ago."

Henk Robbers tells us:

"There is a new version of XaAES (v0.950) available on my homepage.

Done:

1

open_window()

Removed any adaptation of the coordinates of a window when it is opened.
(Giving apps the opportunity to open ghost windows (for whatever reason)).

2

Reorganization of options database. Make it more work as the syntax suggests.
Any grouping of options and program names is allowed.

Options specifications always add up per specified program.

3

The file xa_exec.scl is now executed by a separate program xa_scl.prg
This is done completely automatic. just make sure the program is in the
same folder as XaAES.
The program is started after the XaAES is fully started, making the
setup procedure run much smoother.

4

A log of XaAES booting up is written to xa_setup.log
A log of what xa_scl.prg does is written to xa_scl.log

5

Implemented boolean variable type 'bool':
boolean value denotations are 'true' and 'false'.
Any other type is coerced to one of these.
int: not zero yields true,
string: not empty yields true.
undefined yields false.

Simple if statement implemented.

In the setup the statement is restricted to 1 bool and there is no nesting.
No expressions.

Same restriction for xa_scl. But that will change in the future.

The simple if statement is mainly implemented to make it easier to have
different versions of your setup in a single file without the excessive and
cumbersome use of commenting by '#'.
See the example xa_exec.scl included.

6

The run command in xa_exec.scl can have wildcards.
All matching names in the directory are launched.

Sort of autogem function.

Thanks Martin Tarenskeen and Patrick Prokopovitch for the ideas.

The explode program has thus moved to a folder named 'autogem' that has become
part of the distribution.

7

Fixed the 3 pixel gap that sometimes occur when a dialogue is windowed by XaAES.

9

Implemented the easiest (and rather effective) redraw optimization: 'engulfing' queued redraw message are amalgamated.

10

Fixed transparency of text objects with 3d effects set.

10

Restrictions on the XaAES function of putting dialogues in windows.

No window is created:

1 If the application does not call form_do at all.

2 The application already locked the screen (wind_update()) beforehand.

In both cases XaAES behaves as all the other AES's.

Because many applications rely on the fact that all AES's restore a form_alert background, this is done by XaAES as well now, be it only when the app has locked the screen. There might be something on the screen underneath the alert that is not a window.

This might fix problems with programs that do wild things on the screen.

Those who want to use taskbar at its full potential under XaAES should contact its author Jo Even Skarstein.

Have fun!"

Stanislaw Opichal tells Henk (and Jo Evan):

"I love to see several things I mentioned are fixed now! You are doing a good job as always.

Hey, Jo! What about some new update of TaskBar that would be XaAES compatible? There will be more people using XaAES I'm sure in the near future."

Carey Christenson asks about using a new IDE hard drive with a Falcon:

"I have a Falcon030 about the end of February I went out and bought a 40 GB 7200 RPM IDE Maxtor Hard drive. I am still using my 84 meg stock Falcon IDE hard drive as the Boot-up partition. I forgot to mention the part number MX6L040J2, this is Maxtor's own part number that I found on their web-site. My question is this, I have the stock IDE 84 meg hard drive first inline on the ribbon cable then the Maxtor 40 GB is last or second on the chain. When I first boot-up the Maxtor spins up but is not recognized by my HD software. Once I get to the XBOOT screen I can power down and reboot and it is recognized and all is well. I forgot to mention that if I would have continued on after the XBOOT screen on the first boot-up that NONE of the partitions would be seen by my OS!!! OK, now

that is one way of booting up, the other and this is really weird, is to power up the 40 GB Maxtor (It is hooked to my PC tower which houses my SCSI CD-Rom and CD-Burner I also turn the power on in the first method as well.) Then UNHOOK the 40 pin ribbon cable the hard drive begins to spin up and then plug it back in. It is recognized and all is well. It is my understanding that there maybe a spin up jumper on the hard drive after going to the web-site. I failed to turn up anything. Any suggestions are welcomed. I am thinking of calling Maxtor and finding out if there is such a jumper in the meantime I am open to suggestions."

Lonny Pursell tells Carey:

"I had a similar problem with my Hades060 and a brand new Maxtor IDE drive. I could do weird things like plug the drive into the 40pin cable after it spun up, then the machine would see it. However, no combination of jumpers or drive arrangements would make it boot like it was suppose to. In the end Fredi at Medusa Systems told me not to use newer Maxtor drives. Due to the language barrier I am not sure exactly why, only that he said he tested one and found it to be non-standard, or rather not backward compatible to EIDE I assume. Needless to say I bought a Quantum as he suggested and it took right off, bought another one a bit newer and it works great too. I eventually re-sold the Maxtor to a PC user and it worked fine, so the Maxtor driver certainly had issues with the Hades EIDE bus. I don't know if this info is helpful but I thought I'd share it. I know I was sweating bullets over it at the time."

Iggy Drougge adds:

"Slow spin-up? Try cutting wire 0 on the IDE cable (usually marked with nuance of red)."

Joseph Place asks about Blowup030:

"I just received a copy of BlowUP030 (software only) for my Falcon. I was sure that it would not work with MagiC/NVDI, but I am trying it, and so far no problems but typing is slowed down a bit. Should I expect some problems? Is there a better way to get higher screen resolutions without hardware?"

Ctirad Fertr tells Joseph:

"Yes, use Videlity."

Jonathan Mortimer concurs with Ctirad:

"I agree. It's very quick!"

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

[illegible]

->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Microsoft officials won't comment on Freon. But the software titan has been playing catch-up to Sony since it introduced the Xbox last year. Though Microsoft hoped the introduction of a hard disk and other features would inspire developers to write more exciting games than for the PlayStation 2, Sony's hardware has retained an edge among consumers and programmers.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Dell Starts Sweepstakes for PC Buyers

Dude, you might be getting cash.

With the PC industry still smarting from a brutal spring, Dell is buttressing its hopes for a back-to-school sales bump by giving away \$50,000 a day all month. Those who buy a desktop or notebook from the Round Rock, Texas-based computer maker will automatically be entered in the sweepstakes.

Dell typically offers mail-in rebates, instant rebates, free printers, free shipping, free CD burners and other incentives to spur PC sales, but the company says the \$1.5 million cash giveaway is a first.

"We just thought this would be a really popular way to engage with our customers at a time when there are some great values out there," Dell spokesman Bob Kaufman said.

Dell also plans other promotions this summer as well as new ads in its popular TV campaign, which feature the exuberant Steven telling consumers, "Dude, you're getting a Dell."

Analysts say Dell's promotion is another sign of tough times in the PC market.

"Obviously Dads and Grads did not come through," said Toni Duboise, who follows the desktop PC market for market researcher ARS. "They really need to motivate sales."

Although the second quarter is typically weak for PC makers, in past years there has been some pickup in late May and June as people snap up electronics for Father's Day and graduation gifts. However, Apple Computer and Palm have already warned that they saw no such pickup this year, and Hewlett-Packard has said retail inventory of its PCs has swelled.

A series of spring rebates from PC makers appears to have had little impact on overall demand.

Dell, however, has been seeing its consumer business grow this year as it has grabbed a greater share of the market. In the first quarter, Dell's consumer sales grew 26 percent compared with last year, with unit sales up 45 percent, Kuafman said.

Dell, which has passed Apple to become the sales leader in the education market, says it is growing in popularity among college students. Dell cites a new survey of college students done by Student Monitor, which found Dell to be the top brand for desktop and notebook computers.

Duboise said Dell was actually less aggressive on marketing than she expected this spring.

"They really didn't do that much," Duboise said. "I kept waiting for the other shoe to drop. There really wasn't anything that special."

As for the sweepstakes, Duboise said it's unlikely to spur PC demand but could help lure those who need a PC but are also anxious about the economy.

"I think it is a rather odd promotion," Duboise said. "But if you think about it, maybe they are trying to reach out to those people who do not have consumer confidence, those lotto players."

Like most other sweepstakes, entrants aren't technically required to buy anything. Anyone can sign up by mail, no purchase required.

China Threatens Internet Cafe Owners

China has threatened the operators of unlicensed Internet bars with criminal prosecution as part of a safety crackdown launched after a fire at an Internet cafe in Beijing killed 25 customers, state media reported Saturday.

From July 1 to August 31, unlicensed cyber cafes will be shut down and the owners prosecuted, Xinhua News Agency quoting Ministry of Culture official Liu Yuzhu as saying. No new Internet bars will be allowed to open during that period, the report added.

Legal cafes have to reregister by Oct. 1, Liu said, and will have to pass safety inspections. According to the Ministry of Culture, only 46,000 of China's 200,000 Internet cafes are registered.

Cyber cafes across the country were ordered closed for safety inspections after a June 16 fire at an illegal Internet bar in Beijing killed 25 customers and injured 12. The closures coincided with a nationwide crackdown in which thousands of cafes have been shut over the past year for failing to install software to track the sites visited by users.

China's communist government tightly controls content on the Internet, blocking sites considered subversive or obscene.

EU: Microsoft Passport Raises Privacy Issues

The European Union's privacy watchdog wants further scrutiny of Microsoft's .NET Passport system to see if it complies with data protection laws, according to a document obtained by Reuters on Tuesday.

EU national privacy controllers, who monitor compliance with the bloc's privacy laws, said an analysis conducted by their Internet Task Force showed closer checks were needed.

"Although Microsoft has put in place some measures to address data protection, a number of elements of the .NET Passport System raise legal issues and therefore require further consideration," said the document,

adopted at a meeting in Brussels on Monday and Tuesday.

Launched in 1999, .NET Passport aims to simplify e-commerce by allowing consumers to store passwords, credit-card numbers and other personal information in one location. It has already registered over 100 million users.

To register, users have to provide personal data - emails, usernames, passwords and, in some cases, phone numbers. Microsoft says users supply data on a voluntary basis.

Microsoft said in a statement that it was fully in line with EU rules.

"We have a long history of working with the National Data Protection Authorities in the EU member states and are always eager to hear and address their concerns," it said.

Under EU data privacy rules, customers' personal data can only be used by a firm or passed on to others with the prior consent of the individual.

The EU document said controllers wanted to examine more closely whether .NET Passport users were fully aware that some of their data would sometimes be transferred to a party other than Microsoft, possibly located in a third country.

The officials questioned the value and quality of the consent given by users to such operations, and the data protection rules of the Web Sites affiliated to .NET Passport.

The experts also said they wanted to weigh the security risks associated with such transfers.

In the light of their initial study, data controllers decided "to undertake further analysis...to assess where the European data protection principles are correctly complied with and, where appropriate to identify elements of the systems that require changes," the document said.

Any breach of EU rules would require Microsoft to modify the way the system collects personal information.

While the Commission has authority to help member states interpret EU law, any legal action would be launched by the individual member states.

Several national privacy controllers said last month that associations aimed at protecting privacy had been asking governments to open an investigation and could get their way.

Any investigation would be separate from a probe by the competition arm of the Commission, which is looking into Microsoft's Windows operating system, alleged to work better with its own server software than those of its rivals.

Auction Sites: Wire Transfers a Bad Bid

Earlier this year, Shahir El-Shaieb lost \$1,645 in an online auction, and he has little hope of getting the money back.

That's because El-Shaieb paid for the Apple Computer Macintosh G4 he found on eBay with a wire transfer. Unlike credit cards and checks, wire transfers can't be canceled after they've been sent. And that means they've been used in many fake auctions - so many that several online auction sites are warning visitors of the dangers.

"A significant portion of Internet fraud is committed through wire transfer payments. We urge you to arrange alternative payment with the seller," auction site uBid said in a note posted on its site and e-mailed to all winning bidders. "Money wired to any location (within the United States or overseas) is virtually impossible to reclaim. We highly recommend against wiring money to fulfill payment at auction close."

uBid posted that note after seeing an upswing in bidders being defrauded by sellers who required them to pay with a wire transfer, company officials said Wednesday.

"We just believe that (using wire transfers) is not the way to do business," said Christian Feuer, uBid's chief executive officer. Feuer acknowledged that there are legitimate uses for wire transfers in online auctions, but he said that "because it is problematic to control (using wire transfers) we discourage it."

Yahoo stopped covering wire transfers with its fraud insurance last November and sends e-mail notices to bidders warning about the use of them.

"We understand that a lot of times they are a legitimate way to settle a transaction," said company spokeswoman Nancy Evars.

eBay and Amazon.com representatives did not return calls seeking comment about their policies on the use of wire transfers.

Fraud has been a persistent problem for online auction sites. Although most sites claim low rates of fraud, that still translates into hundreds of potentially fraudulent auctions each day.

Most fraud still involves sellers offering items they have no intention of shipping, but the techniques they use to scam bidders have become increasingly sophisticated. This year, scam artists have broken into dozens of eBay accounts by using automated programs to guess the passwords. Once they have control of the accounts, the scam artists use the reputable seller's good reputation to make bids on goods they have no intention of shipping.

Wire transfers, made through a bank or via a service provided by Western Union, are like electronic cash, and unlike credit cards or services such as PayPal, customers are not refunded in cases of fraud.

Scam artists have been using several different variations on the wire transfer scam. Some have used it with accounts they've hijacked. Others have set up fake escrow services to make bidders feel more comfortable about sending a wire transfer.

Auction sites need to do a better job to educate and protect bidders about the dangers of using wire transfers, said Rosalinda Baldwin, editor of The Auction Guild, an online newsletter. Other sites should follow uBid's lead and warn bidders about sellers who require they pay via transfers, she said. Sites should also make people click through a warning about wire transfers when they first register, she said.

"It legitimizes what they are doing when they make an effort to protect you," Baldwin said. "But (many sites) are not even making the effort."

El-Shaieb, a technical writer in Santa Clara, Calif., says he's learned his lesson. He said he wouldn't use a wire transfer service again to pay for another large online auction purchase.

"It's a convenient way to transfer money, but it's also completely unprotected," El-Shaieb said.

Record Labels Mull Suits Against File-traders

Record labels hell-bent on strangling unauthorized music copying on the Internet are considering widening their legal efforts to include lawsuits against individuals, according to industry sources.

The move comes as the industry wrestles to contain the effects of peer-to-peer software applications that allow consumers to link their PCs into massive cooperatives where millions of music titles can be found and copied for free. Despite legal rulings that have helped the labels shut down some of the most popular providers of file-swapping services, such as Napster, such networks have grown unabated.

The labels have not yet decided to sue individuals, industry insiders said. However, it's clear executives are seeking a way to make consumers think twice before uploading or downloading music via the Net. They're also discussing funding a larger education campaign. But some believe the most prolific file-traders should be held legally accountable.

"The subject is on the table," said one industry executive who requested anonymity. "The idea would be to discourage people. Clearly there have been no consequences yet."

The move toward suing individuals, first reported in The Wall Street Journal on Wednesday, would mark a substantial deviation from the path that record labels and movie studios have previously taken in their battles against online piracy.

In the past, labels and movie studios have targeted only companies that have profited--or intended to profit--by the rise in online piracy. The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) has successfully sued Napster and Audiogalaxy; it is continuing lawsuits against Madster (formerly known as Aimster), StreamCast Networks, Grokster and the company that created Kazaa. The industry group has said it intends to add Sharman Networks, which now operates the Kazaa network, to that list.

So far, the lawsuits have been filed for "contributory infringement," which means the labels have charged that companies such as Napster were knowingly aiding and abetting the real music-copiers. But for any of those suits to fly, it means the labels and the judges have acknowledged that the actions of individual file-swappers themselves were direct copyright infringement, and therefore potentially illegal.

Industry insiders say any lawsuits would likely target people who were offering large numbers of files for download by others. They cite a common belief in the industry, initially sparked by a study of Gnutella users conducted by Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center (PARC), that only about

10 percent of file-swappers provide about 90 percent of the content available through networks such as Kazaa.

Discouraging this 10 percent of "providers" would go a long way in reducing the amount of content available through file-swapping networks, industry insiders say.

Previously, record companies, movie studios and software companies have pursued individuals through their Internet service providers. Connecting to most peer-to-peer networks exposes a computer user's Internet address, which can be traced back to an ISP. Copyright owners have sent thousands of letters to ISPs complaining about subscribers' copyright infringement over the past year, resulting in warning letters to the subscribers, and in some cases cancellation of accounts.

The hard-rock band Metallica cited unnamed individuals in its lawsuit against Napster, and the band's attorney said he would likely add specific individuals later. That tack was later dropped, however.

All of this action has had only minimal effect on the total volume of file trading, however.

According to recent estimates by The Yankee Group research firm, close to 7.9 billion audio files were traded in 2001 by computer users 14 years and older. By 2004, they expect that number to rise to more than 11.4 billion.

Record industry insiders say there is no timetable for when potential suits against individuals would be launched.

Man Sentenced for Fraud on eBay Sale

A man who impersonated two major league shortstops to obtain bats to sell on eBay has been sentenced to 21 months in federal prison.

Herbert John Derungs, 32, of San Francisco was sentenced in federal court Monday after pleading guilty to six counts of mail and wire fraud, according to the U.S. Attorney's office.

Derungs admitted he claimed to be shortstops Derek Jeter of the New York Yankees and Nomar Garciaparra of the Boston Red Sox in e-mails sent to the Original Maple Bat Co. in Ottawa, Ontario.

"I will place an order for 50-60 for the 2001 season, because my contract with Louisville Slugger is up, and I am trying to get a feel of what's out there before I decide what bats to use next year. The sooner the better. Thanks Derek," read one e-mail quoted in an affidavit.

The company eventually sent 60 bats worth \$3,319 to addresses in Lakewood, Wash., and Brisbane, Calif., prosecutors said. Original Maple never received any money, prosecutors said.

Derungs also admitted selling the bats on eBay and claiming they were used in games by the players. In one case, one victim traded \$6,000, a Mark McGwire bat and a Rogers Hornsby bat for 15 of the fakes.

Besides the prison sentence, Derungs also was ordered to pay restitution and serve three years of supervised release. He also is banned from going

within 1,000 feet of Pacific Bell Park, where the San Francisco Giants play, and is prohibited from having contact with a Giants employee who allegedly received a threatening e-mail.

Virginia Police to Test Face Software

If you're a criminal, a runaway or a terrorist, a day at the beach here may soon be anything but that.

The city will become the second in the nation - Tampa, Fla., is the other to employ facial-recognition software to assist police in identifying and catching criminals and missing persons.

The system is to be tested along the city's oceanfront resort strip this holiday weekend, and police hope to have it fully operational in two to three weeks.

"We're adding to our ability to prevent crime and keep Virginia Beach safe," Deputy Police Chief Gregory Mullen said Wednesday.

Critics say the software is inaccurate and an invasion of privacy.

"This is a Big Brother contraption," said Kent Willis, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia. "It is a device that allows the police to take pictures of citizens who are doing nothing wrong while they're in a public place."

A board made up of members of minority organizations, civic leagues and the Virginia Beach Hotel/Motel Association helped create guidelines for using the system and will conduct unannounced audits.

The city has used 10 closed-circuit TV cameras to watch the oceanfront since 1993, largely to check traffic and observe crowds. Under the new system, three additional cameras will be used to scan a four-block area and feed images to police station monitors.

The software will create a "map" of 80 distinctive points on the face, such as the distance between features. The system will issue an alert if at least 14 points on a face picked up by a camera match those on a face in a database of mugshots.

If an officer monitoring the computer screen decides the faces look similar, the officer will radio an officer on the street to verify the match in person and take further action.

In Virginia Beach's test, the database will contain about 600 photos of people with outstanding felony warrants as well as volunteers.

The database eventually will contain thousands of mugshots of people wanted for felonies and violent misdemeanors, missing persons and runaways, and people on the FBI's terrorist watch list.

Advisory board member Cornell Fuller said he is confident the system contains enough safeguards to prevent abuse.

"If you go to the ocean I don't think you should have an expectation of privacy," said Fuller. "You give up part of your privacy when you venture

out into the public domain."

Some tourists walking along the resort strip Wednesday said they think the system is a good idea.

"It's for our protection. If you're not doing anything wrong, you don't have anything to worry about," said Bonnie Satterlee, 39, of Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

Judge Says Microsoft Antitrust Disclosure Adequate

A federal judge Tuesday rejected criticism that Microsoft Corp. failed to disclose fully the machinations that led to its antitrust settlement with the Justice Department.

U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly ruled that Microsoft had provided enough details about its contacts with the government to satisfy the legal requirements for antitrust settlements.

"Although Microsoft clearly could have been more fulsome in its descriptions, because the statute does not mandate the release of particular details relevant to a defendant's communications with the United States, the court finds that Microsoft's disclosure is sufficient to satisfy (the law)," Kollar-Kotelly said in the ruling.

Companies are required to disclose their government contacts under the law that governs antitrust settlements, known as the Tunney Act.

Under the Tunney Act, Kollar-Kotelly is charged with determining whether the Justice Department settlement, reached in November, is in the public interest.

In Tuesday's ruling, the judge took a preliminary step toward that decision, concluding that Microsoft and the department had complied with all the legal requirements in negotiating the settlement.

"We're pleased the court affirmed our position," said Microsoft spokesman Jim Desler.

Critics had complained Microsoft's bare-bones disclosure, submitted to the judge in December, contained so few details it was practically useless.

The filing disclosed no lobbying for the settlement beyond contact between its legal counsel and some company officials with state and federal prosecutors during negotiations.

The brevity of the disclosure irritated opponents of the settlement who say the incoming administration of President Bush (news - web sites) rushed to settle the case that was launched in 1998 under the Clinton administration.

But in Tuesday's decision, the judge said the Tunney Act requires only "information sufficient to inform the court as to whether there has been some improper contact between the United States and the defendant."

She also concluded the law does not require the company to disclose its contacts with lawmakers in Congress, as some critics had argued.

"The details demanded by (critics) go well beyond this basic function and likely would do little to inform the court's assessment of the public interest," the judge wrote.

In addition to the Tunney Act endorsement, the judge is also considering a more severe set of antitrust sanctions proposed by nine states that have refused to settle with Microsoft.

The nine states still pursuing the case are California, Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Utah, West Virginia, plus the District of Columbia.

The hold-out states say stricter sanctions are needed to protect new technologies such as Internet services and handheld computers from any anti-competitive tactics.

Microsoft has argued the restrictions being sought by the states would benefit only competitors and would deprive consumers of a reliable platform for software.

Last June, a federal appeals court upheld trial court findings that Microsoft illegally maintained its Windows monopoly in personal computer operating systems by acts that included commingling Web browser code with Windows to fend off Netscape's rival browser.

The appellate judges rejected breaking the company in two to prevent future antitrust violations, but sent the case to a new judge, Kollar-Kotelly, to consider the best remedy.

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